

COMMUNAL VENTURE THAT FAILED

Old Bell Recalls Kalamazoo's Contribution to History

By KEN SELLERS

This week workmen dragged a 500-pound bell into the corner of a dusty barn in Comstock township and left it there to rust, the last known tangible asset of the Alphasdelphian Society, Kalamazoo's single contribution to the history of socialism.

The passage of the bell from proud possession of men who dreamed of human happiness and equality in a hostile world to antiquarian's curio is symbolic of the rise, decline, and fall of the Alphasdelphians.

On Dec. 14, 1843, the "Primitive Expounder," newspaper published in Ann Arbor carried an appeal to men of good will to meet at the school house on Clark's lake in Columbia, Jackson County for the formation of a communistic colony.

A Dr. H. R. Schetterly was the guiding genius of the movement and Jan. 3, 1844, was set as the date for reconvention. In the mean-

With such articulate men urging the system and their own bitter struggles in wresting a living from the wilderness to guide them, Michigan's pioneers by the dozens turned over their holdings for stock in the enterprise.

More than 3,000 acres were put into common holdings and traded for the southeast quarter of Comstock township, which the clerk of the quartering committee described as "a gentle undulating plain, extending south, east, and west for miles, and being covered with the most thrifty timber."

Colony Restricted to 51

Organized in 1844, the colony membership was restricted to 51. Many were turned away. President of the association was Dr. Schetterly. A. A. Darrow of Bellevue was vice president; E. S. Camp of Marshall was secretary; and Dr. Ezra Stetson, Galesburg, was a director.

One of the county's first pioneers, Roswell Ransom, was converted.

Late in 1844 a "mansion," two stories high and 200 feet long was built near the Kalamazoo

river, after the collapse of the enterprise the large hall was sold by the county, cut up, and transported to Galesburg where it was occupied by a foundry and wind mill factory. Eventually it was demolished. The bell which hung in the belfry of the "mansion" served the Galesburg fire station for many years and eventually was replaced by a fire siren. It was returned to the County Farm, built on the site of the association's center of activities, and left there. The bell was bought only a few days ago by Grant Johnson, Galesburg store owner, and stored in the barn of the farm he recently purchased from Tom Ford, Miller road.

The Alphasdelphians owned a sawmill and a newspaper, the Alphasdelphian Tocsin. The society's constitution stated that "Religious and political opinions of the members are to be unmolested and inviolated."

Not Completely Impractical

Nor were the primitive communists completely impractical. They required members to have six months provisions before joining. A share of stock was awarded for each \$50 worth of property added to the common holdings.

By 1845 there were 188 members in residence and at least 150 other persons who belonged to the society but were not part of the enterprise.

of Socialism

Many of the county's most prominent names of the past were to be found on the rolls of the Alphasdelphian Society. John Allen Knight was the school teacher, and Philander H. Bowman was the physician.

Little explanation for the association's end in 1848 is to be found in historical accounts. One member-commentator said that too many large families incapable of supporting themselves made a "hole in the meal bag."

William Ridler, 99-year-old resident of the area, knew some of the association's members some years after the experiment failed. The nonegenarian remembers few conversations about the Phalanx, for the Alphasdelphians were notoriously mum about the enterprise after it crumbled.

Schetterly Never Lost Faith

Lyman Tubbs, buried at Ford's Hill near the river, was the society's patriarch, and the Rev. Richard Thornton was parson and editor of the Tocsin.

Commentators a century later find it easy to assign reasons for the society's sad end, there isn't sufficient evidence to lend much credence to their interpretations. We can only infer what happened.

Fourier was a poor theoretician, although he was working along about the same lines explored later by his intellectual superior Karl Marx. The early Michigan pioneers attempted to operate a socialistic experiment in a hostile capitalistic world with members who refused to alter their thinking. There were drones and gossips to make life miserable for the hard-working members, and, when it came time to divide up the assets some emerged richer than they had entered the enterprise. Others lost everything.

The county purchased the property in the spring of 1848 and the Phalanx was ended.

Schetterly went from Kalamazoo County to LaGrange Phalanx in Indiana, then to Wisconsin Phalanx, and finally took charge of the government light house at Grand Traverse, Mich. To the end of his days he never lost faith in the ideal of a planned society based on the brotherhood of man.



This is another in a series of pictures and stories from out of Kalamazoo's past. Readers with old photographs, or other items of interest are invited to contribute to the series.

time Dr. Schetterly went to work converting more Michigan pioneers and a committee was sent out to select a site for the colony.

Dr. Schetterly evidently was a man of great persuasive powers, for he was able to convert literally hundreds of doughty pioneers to Fourierism, or his variation of it. **Many Turned Over Assets**

Fourierism was a theory of social living evolved by Francois Charles Fourier, a minor French bureaucrat. Fourier believed that men could live together in a planned society in which there would be richer and poorer members but in which the differences between wealth and poverty would be greatly diminished. Among those eminent Americans who saw merit in his scheme were Charles A. Dana, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Albert Brisbane. Horace Greeley lectured and wrote widely in favor of most of its aspects and even reorganized his New York Tribune as a joint stock enterprise under Fourier's influence.



TOM FORD AND OLD ALPHADELPHIAN SOCIETY BELL
... They Dreamed of Utopia 106 Years Ago in Comstock Township

Galesburg Argus May 1968

More Than Century Ago

Socialist Community Experiment Failed

Almost 125 years ago several Galesburg residents became involved in a major experiment in socialism, but the project was a flop and folded after four years.

The organization was called the Alphaadelphia Society (Alphaadelphia means "first brotherhood" and it included a cooperative venture designed to do away with "mine" and "thine" properties and change them to "ours."

Setting up the community (on the present site of the Kalamazoo County Rest Home) was an inspiration of Dr. H. R. Schetterly, then of Ann Arbor, and patterned after views of Charles Fourier, French founder of a socialist system bearing his name.

Three Galesburg men were on the board of directors-- Dr. Ezra Stetson, Harvey Keith and William Earl.

During the some four years the community was in existence, it had almost 500 members and had possession of nearly all of Section 23 and the west half of Section 24 and a large part of the north halves of Sections 25 and 26.

The association was launched in December of 1843 and by May, 1845, residents on the domain numbered 188 with some 300 other members living off the domain in other communities.

The mansion on the domain was completed in the fall of 1844.

Comstock members

lived in their own homes and those who had come from other places were at first quartered wherever they could get lodging until a two-story log shanty was built on the north side of the river.

Any male of good moral character, at least 21, could be admitted to the society by a two-thirds vote of those present-- provided he had six months provisions for the future, or the means to furnish it.

Women could belong at age 18.

The idea was to appraise each member's property, real and personal, and enter upon the books credit for stock at \$50 a share.

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SOCIALISM

Continued

The plan was for each person to do his share of work, and "enjoy the benefits of each other's society and fruits of their own labors."

But rifts, bickering and jealousies occurred and members began to drop away.

The last family on the domain was the Hannibal A. Taylor family.

During the lifetime of the society, a mill race was dug and a small saw-mill and flour mill were in operation. A general store was operated and a school and church opened.

Members sought to dam the river at the site of the domain, but permission was never granted.

The association also planned to build a seminary and a public library.

Most of the leaders of the Alphadelphia Society were of the Universalist faith and most of the preaching was done by their ministers, however other preachers were welcome.

Dr. Schetterly and his committee had arrived in Galesburg two days before Christmas (1843).

It was said he found here "an ardor among the people for entering into association which can never be cooled until their wishes shall have been realized."

It was later said of the settlers that they had survived so many common hardships that already a "brotherhood existed among them. They helped one another with barn raisings, corn husking, etc.

During the 1800's the Kalamazoo River in the domain area was described as "a beautiful stream, nine rods wide and five feet deep in the middle, flowing at the rate of about four miles an hour."

The committee planned the mansion and "manufactories" site (where the rest home is) on a "plain 50 to 60 rods wide descending gradually toward the river, skirting on the south by a range of hillocks about 20 feet high and running parallel to the river."

"Beyond these," a committee report noted, some 10 to 30 rods, is a gently, undulating plain extending south, east and west for miles and covered with the most thrifty timber... There is a spring pouring out a barrel of water a minute one-half mile from where the mansion will stand.

Concerning the area healthwise, the report noted there was no cause for alarm.

"There is no cause for fever here, only two of 150 people over the last seven years have died with it," the report said.

The organization had several "specialists."

They included Philander H. Bowman, physician; James Hoxie, head carpenter; Leonard Luscomb, tailor; G. O. Belland and John Wetherbee, shoemakers; Nelson Tubbs, blacksmith; Luke Keith, wagonmaker; Dr. Schetterly and Rev. Richard Thornton, editors and Levi S. Blakeslee and C. W. Sawyer, printers.

The official publication was called the Alphadelphia Tocsin.

The first marriage among the society's members was that of Miss Emeline A. T. Wheelock to P. H. Whitford in October of 1845. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Asa Bushnell, Galesburg Congregationalist minister.

C. H. Bradford, Alphadelphian poet, wrote a sonnet about it and named it "Socialist's Bride."

The first death on the domain was that of S. M. Vinton.

Kalamazoo County bought the 173-acre property for the rest home (then called the county farm) on Feb. 19, 1849 for \$3,000.

The county board of supervisors had first bought 111 acres in Richland Township (including 80 acres in Section 23, and 31 acres in Section 25 in March, 1847 from a Simeon Mills and wife for \$1,300. The county sold the Richland property to a L. VanDewalker for \$1,500 in February 1849 and the same day bought the present rest home site.

The last president of the association was Luke C. Keith.

Records of the Alphadelphia Society were found after the death of Luke's son, Ethan who died near Galesburg in 1934.

Why Galesburg Was Made Alphadelphia Society Home

Villagers' Enthusiasm Determined Dr. H. R. Schetterly and Association to Locate There.

The Alphadelphia Society which located its community enterprise in Kalamazoo County in 1844 had its start on Dec. 14, 1843 when 56 persons met in a schoolhouse at the head of Clark's lake in Jackson County.

Sessions continued from morning until midnight for three days, while the group mapped plans for organization of a domestic and industrial institution. Men were present from Kalamazoo, Wayne, Oakland, Washtenaw, Genesee, Jackson, Eaton and Calhoun Counties. A constitution was drawn up.

No place for locating the community had been determined and a committee of three was named to view three sites which had been under consideration. This committee comprised Dr. H. R. Schetterly, dominant figure in the organization, then of Ann Arbor; John Curtis of Norville, Jackson County, and William Grant, of Sandstone.

ADJOURN TO BELLEVUE

Approximately three weeks later . . . on Jan. 3, 1844 . . . a second conference was held in Bellevue. This meeting was called

for the purpose of hearing the report of the committee on location, revising the constitution and electing officers. The constitution was there signed by 51 members, nearly all of them the heads of families and consisting of farmers, mechanics and manufacturers. Officers were elected as follows:

President, Dr. H. R. Schetterly, Ann Arbor; vice president, A. Darrow, Bellevue; secretary, E. S. Camp, Marshall; treasurer, John Curtis, Norville. Directors named were G. S. Avery and Alanson Meech, Bellevue; Harvey Keith, William Earl and Dr. Ezra Stetson, Galesburg; William Grant, Sandstone; Amos Pickett, Alson Delamatter and C. W. Vining, Jackson County; Charles Mason and H. B. Teed, Battle Creek.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The committee to view proposed locations for settlement of the community, reported very enthusiastically upon the site in Comstock township, which is now occupied by the County Farm. It was this site which the Bellevue

convention determined upon for its permanent home.

Dr. Schetterly and his committee had arrived in Galesburg Dec. 23, 1843. He found there "an ardor among the people for entering into association which can never be cooled until their wishes shall have been realized." Big crowds attended the preliminary meetings and the reception accorded the committee at Galesburg was so enthusiastic that it settled almost at once that this would be the site decided upon. One enthusiast at Galesburg declared that "no man must oppose a project so fraught with principles calculated to promote the best interests of mankind."

OFFICIAL DESCRIPTION

"The Kalamazoo river is a large and beautiful stream, nine rods wide and five feet deep in the middle, flowing at the rate of about four miles an hour," said the committee report which was given to the association group. "An eight-foot fall can be obtained without flowing any land worth mentioning, and by digging a race one mile and a half in length, it will propel 100 rum of stone in the driest season. The digging is easy and may be done with scrapers and teams."

The committee mentioned "the place where the mansion and the manufactories will stand," as being a plain 50 to 60 rods wide, descending gradually toward the river, skirted on the south by a range of hillocks about 20 feet high and running parallel with the river."

"Beyond these," the report continues, "some 10 to 30 rods, is a gentle undulating plain extending south, east and west for miles, and being covered with the most thrifty timber your committee

ever beheld, consisting of white-wood; black, white and blue ash; white and red oak; two kinds of beech, two kinds of elm, black walnut; soft maple, some cherry and hard maple in large quantity and the best quality.

OTHER ADVANTAGES

"There is a spring, pouring out a barrel of water per minute, one-half mile from where the mansion and manufactories will stand. They say cobble stones for buildings and dams are plenty on the domain, and sand and clay for making brick, in abundance. Iron ore is known to exist on the domain but its extent is not yet found out.

"The Michigan Central railroad will run 1½ miles north of the proposed site of the domain. There is no cause for fever here, there being only two out of 150 in seven years who have died of fever.

"The soil of the domain is exceedingly fertile and of great variety, consisting of prairie, oak openings, timbered and bottom lands along the river. About 3,000 acres of it have been tendered to our association as stock to be appraised at its cash value. Nine hundred acres of this land have been cultivated and nearly all the rest has been offered in exchange for other improved lands owned by members living at a distance."

NAME NEW DIRECTORS

With actual establishment of the colony on the domain near Galesburg, organization meetings were begun at the home of Harvey Keith March 21, 1844. At this time the directors were Spencer Mitchell, Anson Delamatter, John Curtis, H. G. Pierce, John White, Henry H. Reading, James Weeks, William S. Mead, Albert Whitcomb, Dr. H. R. Schetterly, David Ford and Benjamin Wright.

The name Alphadelphia was adopted . . . "first brotherhood." Delamatter was elected as president and Henry Reading secretary.

Comstock members lived in their own houses and those who had come from other places were quartered temporarily in a log shanty on the north side of the river. The mansion or common dwelling place, was first planned for the south bank of the river but the site finally selected was on the north side. The building was completed in the fall of 1844. During its first year of organization, the society had possession of nearly all of Section 23; the west half of Section 24 and a large part of the north halves of Sections 25 and 26.

WORK WAS DIVIDED

All members of the association were assigned specific duties. Many were specialized for definite activity.

The first school of the society was taught by James Allen Knight in a log building on the south side of the river. Most of the members lived on the north side of the river and pupils were ferried back and forth across the stream in a boat. The community had no lawyer, differences being settled by arbitration.

Some of the "specialists" who were members of the community were as follows:

Physician, Philander H. Bowman.

Head carpenter, James Hoxie. Tailor, Leonard Luscomb. Shoemakers, G. O. Ball and John Wetherbee.

Blacksmith, Nelson Tubbs. Wagonmaker, Luke Keith.

Editors, Dr. H. R. Schetterly and Rev. Richard Thornton.

Printers, Levi S. Blakeslee and C. W. Sawyer.

PUBLISH OFFICIAL PAPER

Official publication of the association was called The Alphadelphia Tocsin. While at the domain, the Rev. Thornton also continued publication of his periodical The Primitive Expounder which he had previously printed in Ann Arbor. This was a staunch Universalist journal.

COLONY LISTED 188 RESIDENTS IN MAY OF 1845

Problem of Workers and
Shirkers Rock on Which
Experiment Failed.

Most of the leaders of the Alphadelphia Association were of the Universalist faith and the preaching was largely by pastors of that denomination, although pastor of all denominations were welcomed. The pastors most active there were the Rev. Thornton, J. Billings and E. Wheeler.

Constitution of the society declared "The religious and political opinions of the members are to be unmolested and inviolate; and no member shall be compelled to support, in any way, any religious worship."

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

It was the rule of the association that any person of good moral character of 21 years, could be admitted to membership upon a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided the applicant has six month's provisions for the future or the means to furnish it.

The association was to reward operatives in proportion to the skill or labor bestowed and they were to equalize the labor and skill of males and females. Women could become members upon reaching 18 years.

When organization was perfected the property, personal and real, of each member was appraised by competent judges appointed for that purpose and the amounts were entered upon the books as a credit to each member for stock at \$50 a share.

LIST 188 RESIDENTS

In May, 1845, the number of male and female residents on the domain was listed as 188, with probably a total of 300 residents and non-resident members. On March 9, 1846, Lyman Tubbs and E. M. Clapp placed the value of the association's real estate at \$43,897.21.

The first death on the domain was that of S. M. Vinton, in 1844. The first marriage united P. H. Whitford and Miss Emeline A. T. Wheelock, in October, 1845, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. Asa Bushnell. C. H. Bradford, the Alphadelphian poet, wrote a sonnet about this wedding, published in The Primitive Sxpounder, and entitled "Socialist's Bride."

FELL SHORT OF GOAL

The plan was started as a co-operative venture in which each was to carry his share in making the community one in which members could live in harmony and

Death of E.B. Keith in 1934 Reveals Society's Records

Complete Data Obtained from Survivor of Commu-
nistic Association's Last Chief Executive.

NOTE: The following reminiscences concerning the Alphadelphia Association, formed near Galesburg in 1844, are written by Smith H. Carlton, surviving Civil war veteran, of 1120 March street. Carlton was born May 3, 1847 in Wyoming County, New York, and came to Kalamazoo with his parents in 1849 at the age of 2½ years. At the age of 17, he enlisted during the last year of the Civil war with the 28th Michigan Infantry and participated in several major engagements near the close of the rebellion. His regiment remained in North Carolina on reconstruction duty until February, 1866.

By SMITH H. CARLTON
Corporal, 28th Michigan
Ethan B. Keith died at 83 years,
Aug. 28, 1934, at his home near
Galesburg on a farm southwest of

enjoy the benefits of each other's
society and the fruits of their own
labors.

The idea seemed like a good one,
at the time.

But rifts soon appeared in the
harmony. Jealousies crept in. In-
equalities were charged in the di-
vision of the work, many feeling
they were doing most of the work
and getting the least of the re-
turns. Members began to drop
away and soon it became evident
that disaster was inevitable.

Affairs of the society dribbled
along with efforts made to divide
up the property as fairly as pos-
sible, until the last entry on the
books . . . April 30, 1848.

Kalamazoo's adventure in com-
munism collapsed in total failure.

that community which had been
entered from the government by
his grandfather in 1834.

Among Keith's effects were the
constitution, by-laws and papers
of the old Alphadelphia Associa-
tion, consisting of many leather-
bound volumes and including bills,
receipts, contracts, reports and
correspondence which show all
the activities and the transactions
of the association. Luke C. Keith,
Ehan's father, was the last presi-
dent of the association and he had
retained the records intact.

CARLTON KNEW MEMBERS

Having in my younger days
been acquainted with many former
members of the association, and
having heard much of the story
by word of mouth, I was in-
terested in reviewing the records.
I also know many of the descend-
ants of these old members and am
sure that a brief summary from
the original records will be of in-
terest.

SOCIETY PLANNED PUBLIC LIBRARY AND A SEMINARY

Site of Colony Obtained for
Poor Farm After Long
Controversy.

The Alphadelphia Association
was not a local affair, but com-
prised several hundred members
throughout the state. Headquar-
ters were on the present site of
the County Farm west of Gales-
burg . . . a spot selected for its
beauty, natural advantages and
its central location. The project
was called the "domain," where
the members built a large tene-
ment house called the "mansion."

Permission was sought to dam
the river at the site of the do-
main, but this was never granted,
either. A mill race was dug, how-
ever, and a sawmill and flour mill
placed in operation. A general
store was opened and a school and
church operated. The members
also had a printing office and is-
sued papers.

The association planned to
build a seminary and to establish
a public library. The first meeting
of record on the domain was at the
home of Harvey Keith, March 2,
1844. This session was adjourned
from day to day during which
time a constitution was drafted,
applications for membership ac-
cepted and property inventoried
and appraised.

The labor code provided that
all members should work in com-
mon to produce wealth; that one-
fourth of net income should be
devoted to improvements and
three-fourths to the payment of
labor, whatever its form. Time
records were kept by the treas-
urer. The net income proved to be
small and the pro-rated wages
correspondingly low. One store
clerk was rated at nine shillings a
week. But all held high hopes.

For four years they labored
faithfully. Then hope began to
wane and the serpent entered the
garden. Chiselers and shirkers ap-
peared. A few absconded with un-
earned increment. The more far-
sighted began to withdraw, taking
land for their stock, which several
developed and became wealthy.
After a few years more of strug-
gle and discouragement, a final
meeting was held to dissolve the
association. Re-distribution of as-
sets was promiscuous . . . some
were gainers, others losers and
many received little or nothing.

After years of controversy on
the part of the board of supervi-
sors, the present main building
was erected at a cost of \$2,500
and was later enlarged to its pres-
ent size.

Kea. 1848. 1/24/37

While some reformers took aim at righting social wrongs, others started movements that made the 1840s . . .

. . . a decade of sects

LARRY MASSIE 7-13 87
GAZETTE SPECIAL WRITER

There has never been a decade quite like it.

America's traditional urge for improvement blossomed during the 1840s into a national mania of reform. Theorists devised new remedies for mankind's sundry social, spiritual and digestive ills. Serious-minded reformers campaigned against slavery and for allowing women to vote. Others tried to improve their

countrymen's lot via exotic diets, domiciles or dress. Still others sought salvation through a pot-pourri of imaginative new religions.

For some reason, an inordinate number of avant-garde movements emanated from western New York. Michigan, which drew a major proportion of its pioneer population from that region, also inherited a lion's share of eccentric beliefs. Transplanted to Michigan soil, they flowered into unique contributions to American popular culture.

New York City editor Horace Greeley not only advised young men to go West, but also advocated a form of socialism which flourished in the state.

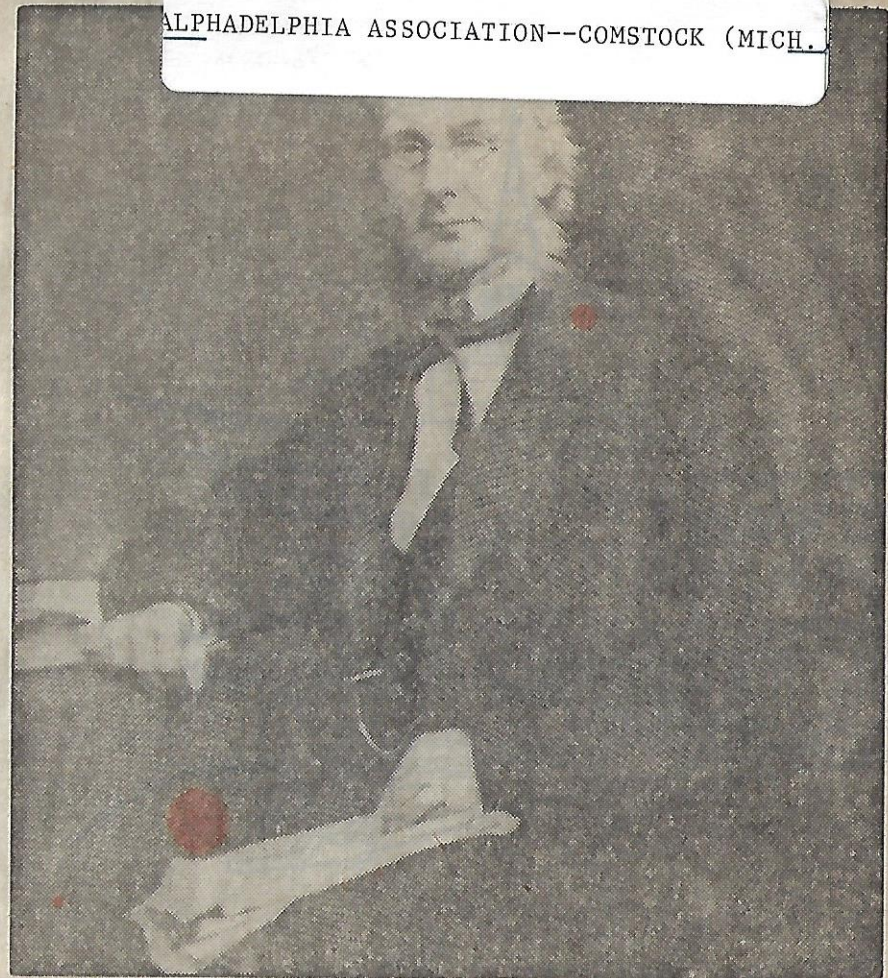
Based on a set of engraved plates dug up near Palmyra, N.Y., Jo-



EDITOR'S NOTE:
This is one in a weekly series of articles by historian Larry Massie that celebrate the 150th anniversary of Michigan statehood.

Please see SECTS, A2

ALPHADELPHIA ASSOCIATION--COMSTOCK (MICH.)



FROM THE LARRY MASSIE COLLECTION

'Go West' was only one of Horace Greeley's exhortations to young men.

SECTS

Continued from A1

seph Smith founded the Mormon church. After Smith's death in 1844, a splinter group of Mormons under King James Strang established a monarchy on Beaver Island.

Modern American spiritualism originated near Rochester, N.Y., in 1848 when three teen-age sisters began communicating with the ghost of a murdered peddler. By the mid-1850s, numerous mediums, spirit rappers and ouiji operators had made Battle Creek the Midwestern headquarters for the sect.

William Miller, a New York state farmer, computed the exact date the world would end. When the time arrived in 1844, thousands of hysterical Millerites gathered on hilltops to await the Judgment Day. Following their "great disappointment," a band of Millerites headed by James and Ellen White founded the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Sister White seasoned her dogma with graham cracker inventor Sylvester Graham's vegetarian precepts and a dash of hydropathy, which promised health through the healing benefits of water.

By 1855, White had moved her church headquarters to Battle Creek, where it op-

erated a worldwide publishing empire. Later, when spiritualist and Adventist ladies donned the daring costume popularized by Amelia Bloomer, spiritual sparks flew in Battle Creek.

The anti-slavery movement germinated in Michigan to produce a prominent spur of the Underground Railroad.

Traveling phrenologists, who critiqued character by feeling bumps on subjects' heads, found in Michigan a receptive clientele. Phrenologist publisher Orson Fowler invented the octagon house for healthier living, and soon the eight-sided structures dotted the Michigan countryside.

The socialism espoused by Greeley was devised by Charles Fourier, a mad French philosopher. Fourier socialism advocated creation of phalanxes. All would live under the roof of one huge building, individuals would be employed according to their aptitude and profits would be divided one-third to capital, one-fourth to talent and five-twelfths to labor.

During the 1840s, at least 25 Fourierist phalanxes were started in America. Most proved short-lived failures, but Brook Farm near Boston won fame as a result of participation by transcendentalist au-

thors.

A young Ann Arbor physician responded to Greeley's advice and attempted the only Fourierist experiment in Michigan. Dr. Henry R. Schetterly, a small, dark-haired man of German descent, arrived in Ann Arbor with his family of five around 1840. He soon became prominent in local scientific and educational circles and published a Universalist journal, "The Primitive Expounder." By 1843, he had become convinced that communal living would remedy society's greed and oppression.

He campaigned for Fourierism in his journal, and on Dec. 14, 1843, called a convention to form a Michigan phalanx. Fifty-six delegates from Wayne, Oakland, Washtenaw, Genesee, Jackson, Eaton, Calhoun and Kalamazoo counties met at a schoolhouse near Jackson. Three days of debates yielded a rough constitution. The phalanx would be called Alphadelphia — first brotherhood.

Of three potential sites for Alphadelphia, Schetterly preferred a plat on the Kalamazoo River just west of Galesburg. He arrived there on Dec. 23 to inspect the land. Galesburg area pioneers responded en masse to his persuasive rhetoric. On Dec. 27, Schetterly wrote his fellow Four-

ierists that in Galesburg "an ardor now exists among the people in this place for entering into association which never can be cooled until their wishes shall have been realized."

The Fourierists reconvened in Bellevue on Jan. 3, 1844, to perfect their constitution. The finished document contained a number of liberal provisions. Religious and political opinions of members were to be inviolate. Any who became ill would be provided for out of the common good. The labor and skill of male and female members were to be considered equal. All children would receive free education.

The association worked something like a stock venture. Members relinquished their land, tools, personal effects, etc., which were appraised by Schetterly and converted into shares. All members labored eight hours a day at a suitable task and received a uniform wage.

By May 1844, more than 1,300 people had become Alphadelphians. The association purchased 2,814 acres of land at a cost of \$32,000. The Alphadelphia domain on the Kalamazoo River hummed like a gigantic beehive that spring. Farmers, millwrights, machinists, furnacemen, printers, mechanics and skilled paper and

cloth makers plied their trade for the good of all. The Alphadelphians dug a millrace, set up a saw mill and erected a two-story "mansion" 20 feet by 200 feet.

By the following year, a wagon shop, blacksmith's forge and barns had been added. The brotherhood sold hides, baskets, grain and livestock. The first year's efforts showed a profit. The future looked bright for Kalamazoo County's Utopia.

But basic human nature reared up. The leadership wrangled, and lack of privacy and the eccentricities of some jarred on others' nerves. What's more, as one old Alphadelphian later recalled: "Too many large families, poor and hungry, who could do no work, or were incapable of supporting themselves, got among us and were a continual expense — a hole in the meal bag from first to last."

Alphadelphia struggled on into 1848, then disbanded as each member tried to salvage something. Kalamazoo County purchased the site of the "mansion" for a poor farm. Today it is River Oaks County Park.

Disillusioned with his fling with socialism, Schetterly secured a job with the federal government as lighthouse keeper at Grand Traverse Bay.

'Utopia' For Four Years

But By 1848, 'Adelphia' Had Broken Down

By KATHY JESSUP
Gazette Staff Writer

A colony of 188 men and women attempted to establish a utopia in Galesburg in 1844.

They wanted to create a place where each man and woman would leave behind personal wealth and competitive spirit to work cooperatively toward something bordering on an American kibbutz. Each person was to be compensated according to his or her contribution to the community and women would work on an equal footing with men.

By 1845, the community located at the present site of River Bend Park, had attracted 188 residents. Perhaps human nature was the thing those 188 people found themselves fighting more than any other impediment.

The last entry in the detailed community log is dated April 30, 1848. It reflects the hostilities and jealousies which had developed as residents quibbled over their work credits and others left the community to become wealthy from the land they were granted in severance.

The plan sounded promising to a small group of men and women who met originally in a Jackson County schoolhouse to brainstorm the idea. They were generally identified as followers of the philosophy of Francois Charles Marie Fourier, a French socialist, who opposed individualism and competition. He suggested society be divided into small groups he called phalanges, with members living in common buildings and cultivating allotted portions of land.

At the time the Galesburg cooperative venture was being brainstormed in 1843, 41 Fourierist communities had been established in the United States.

According to historical records, Dr. H.R. Schetterly, Ann Arbor, arrived in Galesburg in December, 1843, to review the location for the colony. Large crowds reportedly attended the organizing meetings, and the location of rich soil, the Kalamazoo River and access to railroad lines helped confirm the decision to establish the colony here. The community adopted the name "Alphadelphia," or "first brotherhood."

According to historical records, Comstock residents who joined the colony lived in their own homes and temporary log shanties were erected for those who moved into the area. The common dwelling place was completed in late 1844.

While the community was directed largely by Universalist pastors, "the religious and political opinions of the members are to be unmolested and inviolate...", according to the bylaws. To become a member, a

person was judged to be of 21 - years - old moral character, and be voted into membership by two-thirds of the members present. The applicant was also required to have six month's provisions or the means to furnish it. While community leaders attempted to "equalize the labor and skill of males and females," women were eligible for membership at age 18.

When an individual or family joined the colony, their personal property and possessions were assessed and they were given stock in the community in return for turning over their possessions.

The dream was a short reality. The Galesburg kibbutz collapsed after four years when jealousies crept in and some members began to charge they were doing a majority of the work while others received more compensation. For months members began to pack up and leave until it became apparent in early

1848 the colony would dissolve.

"The more farsighted began to withdraw, taking land for their stock which several developed and became wealthy," Smith H. Carlton wrote in 1937, recalling conversations with some former colony members. "After a few years more of struggle and discouragement, a final meeting was held to dissolve the association. Redistribution of assets was promiscuous...some we gainers, others losers and many received little or nothing."

Brook Farm, located in Roxbury, Mass., was probably the most noted attempt at Fourierism when the philosophy became popular in the United States. That colony, established on 160 acres of Massachusetts land, had been somewhat successful until fire destroyed the core community building in 1846. It lasted a year longer than the Galesburg venture, however, closing after an auction disposed of the property in 1849.

Kathy Jessup 7/14/76

PROJECT A FAILURE AFTER FOUR YEARS

Plan Based on Fourierism Tried Out at Site of Present Infirmary.

Kalamazoo County's only major experiment in communism rose and fell within the brief space of four years.

Inspired by Dr. H. R. Schetterly, then of Ann Arbor, the co-operative venture was launched late in 1843, actually began in 1844, and after an auspicious start it totally collapsed in 1848. The community was located on the present site of the Kalamazoo County Farm, west of Galesburg.

First meeting on the domain in Comstock township was held March 21, 1844 and the final entry in the association books was on April 30, 1848.

BASED ON FOURIERISM

Though the Kalamazoo communistic enterprise did not follow exactly in the footsteps of the plan devised by Francois Charles Marie Fourier, French socialist, the principle of organization was an adaption of his ideas. Fourier was born April 7, 1772 and died Oct. 10, 1837. His most finished works on theory of community life were published in 1829 and 1830.

Fourier regarded social arrangements resulting from individualism and competition as imperfect and immoral. He urged substitution of co-operative or united effort. Under his scheme society was to be divided into departments which he called phalanges, each numbering about 1,600 persons. Each group was to live in a phalanstere or common building and have a certain portion of soil allotted for cultivation. The staple industry of each community was to be agriculture. The rich and poor were to intermingle so that distinction became imperceptible. It was also proposed to do away with marriage and to substitute a system of license.

The only attempt made to establish such a colony in Fourier's lifetime ended in failure. Although the project was abandoned, Fourier was not discouraged and for the rest of his life lived in expectation that successful communities would be established.

PLAN TRIED IN U. S.

By the time that effort was made to establish a permanent community in Kalamazoo County, there was precedent in this coun-

try in the form of phalanges already in operation. In fact, the decade from 1840 to 1850 marked the peak of this idea in the United States, no less than 41 such communities being started.

The Brook Farm was the most notable made. This was a colony which combined agriculture and education, located on 160 acres west of Roxbury, Mass. It was organized in the summer of 1841 by the Rev. George Ripley, Unitarian minister and editor of The Dial. He was aided by his wife, Sophia Dana Ripley, a woman of rare culture. Here it was sought to unite the interests and the efforts of the worker and the thinker. Each individual was free to do as he pleased, as long as he did not intrude upon the rights of others. Stock was sold and among the shareholders were such prominent men as Charles A. Dana and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Ralph Waldo Emerson was a member. Contributors to the weekly paper of the society included James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier and Horace Greeley.

Beginning in 1844 . . . the year the Kalamazoo association was founded . . . this Brook Farm association was called a "phalange." Within three years it had grown from a single farmhouse and a small school to include four houses, extensive workrooms and dormitories. Finally it was decided to put all available resources into a large central building, called the "phalanstery." Success seemed to be within reach, when on the night of March 2, 1846 during a celebration on occasion of opening the new building, it was completely destroyed by fire. The enterprise died with the fire and affairs dragged along until the property was disposed of at auction April 13, 1849.